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COUNTRY PROGRAMMES, MID-TERM REVIEWS AND RELATED MATTERS

Review of the fourth country programme for Equatorial Guinea

Note by the Administrator

I. OBJECTIVE

1. The fourth country programme for Equatorial Guinea was approved by the Governing Council in decision 93/20 of 18 June 1993 for a net indicative planning figure (IPF) of $7,053,000 for the 1993-1995 period. The three priority programme areas proposed were: (a) social services and human resources; (b) planning, management and administration; and (c) natural resources and environment. The present note contains a review of the programme in accordance with the recommendation of the Standing Committee for Programme Matters (DP/1993/73, para. 24).

2. While preserving the overall objectives of the approved country programme, the purpose of the present note is to outline the reorientation and consolidation of the programme. In this respect, the Administrator recommends the Executive Board approve the reorientation of the present country programme for Equatorial Guinea to sharpen its focus on support to governance and the environment and to extend the programming period to 1996. The Government of Equatorial Guinea has agreed with this proposal, as it responds to the country's current needs in technical cooperation in order to utilize the limited IPF resources more effectively and to ensure sustainability.

II. RECENT POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC TRENDS

3. Since 1979, the United Nations Commission on Human Rights has repeatedly expressed its concern regarding the human rights situation in Equatorial Guinea and adopted several resolutions in which it appealed to the Government to restore the fundamental freedoms of its citizens.

4. With the concurrence of the Government, IPF funds were earmarked to finance advisory services in conjunction with missions carried out by the Special Rapporteur designated by the Centre for Human Rights. A United Nations human rights team visited the country in October 1993 and December 1993 and conducted a thorough review of the situation, held extensive discussions with the authorities at various levels, interviewed detainees and collected reliable information on particular cases of arbitrary arrest and torture. In March 1994, the Special Rapporteur presented to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights a comprehensive report (E/CN.4/1994/56).

5. In the report, the Commission outlined the positive political reforms undertaken by the Government in 1993 to address some of the issues raised by the international community, such as: (a) permission granted to the International Committee of the Red Cross to conduct regular visits to prisons; (b) introduction of a multi-party system and legalization of 13 opposition parties; (c) implementation of the decision by the Government of Morocco to withdraw 400 Moroccan troops deployed as presidential guards since 1979; and (d) legislative elections held in November 1993 assigning 12 out of the 80 parliamentary seats in the National Assembly to 3 opposition parties. However, the Special Rapporteur concluded that serious violations of human rights still persist in Equatorial Guinea.

6. The government response to the Commission's findings is that few incidents of violation of human rights had prevailed in the past. Nevertheless, after October 1993, the date on which amnesty was granted to all political prisoners, the Government initiated a policy to promote human rights. Furthermore, the Government indicated that some elements mentioned in the report were merely customary practices, thus not necessarily considered as violation of human rights per se.

7. In the area of electoral process, a technical mission was fielded in June 1993 to assess the need for assistance. The mission recommended to the Secretary-General that the international community, prior to providing electoral assistance and international observers to Equatorial Guinea, require the Government to comply with its commitments to human rights and to meet the minimum requirements, i.e., the electoral code must be revised and a census held. No further United Nations assistance was extended in this field since the Government did not appear to meet these fundamental political requirements.

8. With regard to economic development, Equatorial Guinea has seen a decline in world prices for its main export commodities - coffee and cocoa. However, petroleum has been extracted recently, producing an estimated 700,000 barrels per year. The Government has agreed to a stabilization programme with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), based on the devaluation of the CFA currency in January 1994. The IMF programme is aimed at supporting the country's balance of payments in order to maintain a minimal level of debt service. A complementary medium-term structural adjustment programme is being negotiated with the World Bank. Furthermore, the Government is seeking to obtain more assistance from the international community to launch its economic recovery.

9. The political environment has not been conducive to stable external aid flows and overall development cooperation activities slowed during the 1992-1993

period. Major bilateral aid partners regarded the legislative elections of November 1993 as illegitimate and inconsistent with an acceptable level of democratic reform. The resumption of their assistance to Equatorial Guinea is conditioned on progress being made in the field of human rights and democratization.

10. As for the United Nations system, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) is in the process of submitting to its Executive Board a new country programme (1994-1998) for approval. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) will also present an interim report on its programme to the UNDP/UNFPA Executive Board in June.

11. For the Government of Equatorial Guinea, the second half of 1993 has been a period of political transition and reform. The tense political climate resulted in a number of obstacles, including an absence of national development framework, a lack of competent government counterparts and a lack of confidence on the part of the donor community, preventing the resumption of cooperation activities. These obstacles impeded the launching of the UNDP programme development exercise for the priority sectors defined in the fourth country programme.

12. In accordance with the Government's commitment to implement the recommendations made by the Commission on Human Rights in its latest report, UNDP will be requested to support the democratiz tion process. In this case, UNDP and the Government will jointly develop the content of the fourth country programme to sharpen its scope and build on opportunities for future progress in the area of human rights and democratization, through a coherent programme in priority areas of governance and environment.

III. THE COUNTRY PROGRAMME

13. In the past, UNDP assistance concentrated on capacity-building and institutional support. In view of the complexity and the cautious optimism for more participatory political reform, the original objectives of the country programme are no longer valid in the present political context. Such areas as social services, where UNDP cooperation was requested, require substantial funding to cover recurrent costs and will be better supported by other financial partners in the future.

14. Ongoing projects comprise assistance to the Tropical Forest Conservation Plan; a project approved for 1993 supporting the monitoring missions of the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights; and three small projects providing United Nations Volunteers (UNV) expertise to World Food Programme and International Fund for Agricultural Development programmes. Future UNV assistance will be consolidated in a multisectoral umbrella project.

15. The main themes of the revised country programme will support Equatorial Guinea to achieve objectives related to sustainable human development, i.e., governance, poverty alleviation and environmental protection. UNDP programmes, still to be defined, will total $5 million for the 1994-1996 period.

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16. In the governance programme, a series of actions will be supported to sustain the technical cooperation needs recommended by the Commission on Human Rights. The various activities outlined in the Commission's report address the importance of maintaining the necessary impetus and technical cooperation with the Government in implementing the proposed measures, i.e.: comprehensive revision of the national legislation and judiciary system; education on human rights laws for broad constituencies; and enhanced prospects for continuous policy dialogue between the Government and other groups in society. Components of economic management and decentralization of public sector administration will be incorporated.

17. The second programme will focus on the formulation and implementation of a national environmental action plan (NEAP), for which UNDP will continue to support capacity-building, long-term strategies and operational plans. This will involve restructuring government policies and institutions in support of the environmental programme. Complementary assistance from Capacity 21 and Global Environment Facility (GEF) funds will be sought to facilitate coordination and resource management of conservation programmes. UNDP will promote an interactive approach of governmental strategy and policies favourable to participatory development and promotion of poverty alleviation. Local non-governmental organizations will be sponsored and involved to the maximum extent possible to encourage environment-related activities at the community level.

18. UNDP will endeavour, with other donors, to assist in the resumption of external resource flows and to foster policy dialogue through round-table sectoral consultations to bring about national initiatives to promote lawful governance and rational utilization of natural resources.

19. In addition, Joint Consultative Group on Policy members will collaborate closely to identify common actions to alleviate the negative social impact of structural adjustment and the effects of the currency devaluation.

IV. RECOMMENDATION

20. The Administrator recommends that the Executive Board approve a reorientation of the fourth country programme for Equatorial Guinea to focus on governance and environmental issues and to extend the approved programming period to 1996.

Annex

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

I. ESTIMATED RESOURCES FOR PROGRAMMING PERIOD 1993-1996 (FOURTH COUNTRY PROGRAMME FOR EQUATORIAL GUINEA)

(Thousands of dollars)

Carry-over from fourth cycle IPF	(33)
Fifth cycle IPF	11 375
1992 expenditure	2 431
Cost-sharing	-
TOTAL	8 911

II. ALLOCATION OF RESOURCES FOR PROGRAMMING (IPF + COST-SHARING) BY AREA OF CONCENTRATION (1993-1996)

(Thousands of dollars)

	IPF	Percentage
Governance (human rights)	2 150	24.1
Environment	2 500	28.1
Other sectors (ongoing projects)	1 417	15.9
Subtotal	6 067	68.1
Unprogrammed reserve	2 844 a/	31.9
TOTAL	8 911	100.0

III. Total TSS-1 approved for programming (1994-1995) is $143,000.

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a/ Representing 25 per cent of fifth cycle IPF.